Please note: the information below was provided to DFAT by Emergency Management Australia. Enquires about this information should be directed to Emergency Management Australia.

# **Emergency Management Australia**

*“Australia’s architecture for managing fire-related disasters and post-disaster recovery”*

*Joe Buffone  
Director-General*

**Overview**

1. The Emergency Management Context
2. Australian Government Crisis Management Framework
3. National Disaster Management and Recovery Continuum
4. Australian Warning System
5. Emergency Management Australia
6. National Situation Room
7. National Coordination Mechanism

## The Emergency Management Context in Australia

Local Governments and the Australian Community (Green Zone)

* Over 500 Local Government Area’ (LGA’s) across Australia and are vastly different.
* Different hazards and risks driven by geography and climate.
* Different population considerations, large urban councils versus regional or remote areas.
* Different Political, Security, Social, Economic, Infrastructure, Environment, Information considerations.

Australian States and Territories (Orange Zone)

* Under Australia’s constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for emergency management and for the protection of life, property and the environment.
* Each jurisdiction operates independently within their own emergency management legislative framework.
* Different levels of maturity in emergency management capabilities (across the PPRRRRR continuum).
* Coordination of jurisdictional resources and public information in response to a crisis through a ‘lead’ agency arrangements.
* Provide rotating co-chair for the Commissioners Chief Officers Strategic Committee, an operational committee (co-chaired by DGEMA) that can request other jurisdictional assistance through the National Resource Sharing Centre.
* Can request (via nominated senior officials within jurisdictions) Australian Government assistance in accordance with COMDISPLAN. This has no legislative basis.

Australian Government (Red Zone)

* The Australian Government coordinates its response to disasters and emergencies through EMA.
* EMA Group stakeholders include state and territory emergency management and emergency services agencies, local governments, non-government organisations. Examples include Australian Red Cross and the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and private sector organisations, particularly insurance and banking sectors.
* Key Commonwealth Agency partners include central agencies, the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the NRRA, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Department of Health, Geoscience Australia, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and intelligence agencies.

Additional Briefing Points

* As either the risk, consequence or intensity of a crisis worsen, LGA’s, states and territories begin to seek additional support and assistance.
* The Australian Government’s tolerance for risk has significantly changed following the 19/20 High Risk Weather season and the ongoing COVID-19 situation.
* Disasters and crisis have become highly politicised and the desire for all governments to be seen to be doing more, fed by public sentiment and exacerbated by media will continue to present challenges for emergency management across all levels.

1. **The Australian Government Crisis Management Framework**

* The Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF) outlines the Australian Government’s approach to preparing for, responding to and recovering from crisis events.
* The AGCMF provides ministers and senior officials with guidance on their respective roles and responsibilities and sets out the arrangements that link ministerial responsibility to the work of key officials, committees and facilities.
* The AGCMF review incorporates enhancements and embeds processes, which have been developed since its last review in October 2020. The review reflects the Government’s response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.
* As Australia’s national disaster management organisation, EMA is the principal executor of the AGCMF and implements the Australian Government’s crisis management arrangements.
* The AGCMF is an overarching, decision-making framework designed to manage crises of all kinds, end-to-end, by passing through seven management phases of prevention, preparedness, response, relief, recovery, reconstruction and risk reduction.
* The AGCMF outlines processes for the management of hazard-specific crises and crises requiring whole of government coordination and links ministerial actions & considerations with the work of key officials, committees and facilities.
* Clarifies roles and responsibilities at the Federal and State level.

Recent changes to the AGCMF

* Establishment of the National Recovery and Resilience Agency focused on recovery, resilience, and championing risk reduction commencing 01 July 2021.
* Establishment of the Australian Climate Service on 1 July 2021 that will connect and leverage the Australian Government’s extensive climate and natural hazards information into a single national view.

Triggers for Commonwealth involvement under the AGCMF

* The scale of the crisis and its potential impact.
* An incident across multiple jurisdictions or industry sectors.
* A request from a State or Territory.
* A crisis with both domestic and international components.
* Community expectation of national leadership.
* Multiple simultaneous crises.
* Australian Government offers assistance or effected country requests assistance internationally.

## National Disaster Management and Recovery Continuum

The Australian Government’s continuum comprises seven phases of crisis management and recovery. Some crisis events may not include all seven phases. It is also possible for phases to overlap, be considered simultaneously or to have multiple lines of effort within a single phase.

The phases are:

1. Prevention - measures to eliminate or reduce the severity of a hazard or crisis.
2. Preparedness - arrangements to ensure that, should a crisis occur, the required resources, capabilities and services can be efficiently mobilised and deployed.
3. Response - actions taken in anticipation of, during, or immediately after a crisis to ensure that its impacts are minimised, and that those affected are supported as quickly as possible.
4. Relief - meeting the essential needs of food, water, shelter and medicines for people affected by a crisis event.
5. Recovery - short and medium-term measures to restore or improve the livelihoods, health, economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and ‘build back better’1 to avoid or reduce future disaster risk.
6. Reconstruction - implementing longer-term strategies post-incident to ‘build back better’ from a crisis, including identifying sustainable development approaches and mitigation measures that may be applicable beyond the directly affected community.
7. Risk reduction - reducing future risk and identifying measures that may be taken to reduce the impact of future crises.

## The Australian Warning System

* The Australian Warning System has been developed based on community research and input from Australia’s emergency services and hazard agencies.
* The system uses an evidence-based approach, gathered through a multi-stage national research project where more than 14,000 people were surveyed or interviewed on improvements that would make warnings clearer, and lead people to take action during hazard events.
* There is strong evidence that a nationally consistent warning system, including consistent naming of levels, symbology, and the addition of clear action statements will drive people to make informed decisions relating to their safety.
* Implementation of the AWS will be accompanied by a national education campaign to enhance public communication on desired community behaviours and actions.

The Australian Warning System comprises the following elements:

* Warning level names – Advice, Watch and Act, Emergency Warning
* Call to Action Statements – A suite of nationally agreed Call to Action statements will be used together with the warning level name (e.g. Emergency Warning – Leave Now). These were based on research conducted by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Communications and Warnings research project.
* Warning Order – The majority of jurisdictions support the following order for the Warning:
  + Warning Level, Hazard Type/Location, Call to Action
  + An example would be – Emergency Warning, Bushfire (Katoomba), Leave Now
* Spatial Display - A set of nationally agreed icons that show the escalating hazard type within the scaled colour palette of yellow, orange, red has been developed and agreed by all jurisdictions.
* Applicability to other hazards – The Australian Warning System was designed to be used for bushfire, flood, cyclone, heatwave and extreme weather (storm)
  + However, some jurisdictions will apply the system to a broader range of hazards.

## Emergency Management Australia

* Emergency Management Australia (EMA) is a Group within the Department and is Australia’s national disaster management organisation, and the Australian Government’s focal point for situational awareness, emergency preparedness, crisis management and response and early recovery for domestic crises.
* The recently enhanced EMA operating model will deliver national disaster preparedness and response capabilities, strategically position the Australian Government to manage crises that are expected to grow in frequency, complexity and duration and strengthen its role and authority in coordinating requests for Government assets.
* The Emergency Declaration Act 2020 and the National Emergency Declaration (Consequential Amendments) Act 2020 came into effect on 16 December 2020. The Acts empower the Governor-General to make a national emergency declaration on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Director General of EMA may be called to brief the Prime Minister on the making of a national emergency declaration.
* EMA Group is led by Director General Joe Buffone PSM and was officially appointed to the role in June 2021. Joe brings extensive experience working across Australia’s emergency management, health and national security areas.
* EMA Group consists of four Branches with the following two Braches reporting directly to DG EMA to group all operational activities:
  + National Crisis Planning and Coordination Branch; and
  + National Crisis Operations Branch.
* The following two Branches are led by acting First Assistant Secretary, National Coordination and Operational Support to enable the building and delivery of operational capabilities for Enhanced EMA and overseeing the security of the Executive Government:
  + Operational Capability Programs Branch; and
  + (Executive) Government and Major Event Security Branch.

Key priorities for the EMA Group over the next 12 months:

* To transform the Australian Government Crisis Coordination Centre (AGCCC) to be the all-hazards National Situation Room (NSR), inclusive of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM), working in partnership with the Australian Climate Service (ACS) to produce a national near real time situational and decision support capability for disaster management activities for executive decision makers;
* To establish a national multi-agency emergency management exercising capability to test the nation’s disaster management capabilities to prepare for catastrophic disasters to ensure the community is safe and protected;
* To develop a technical solution that understands the location of National Security Committee (NSC) Ministers, in support of Continuity of Executive Government (COEG) arrangements, to deliver information rapidly in the event of a crisis;
* To develop an Emergency Management Capability Plan to re-establish a national emergency management stockpile of critical disaster stores, to supplement and reinforce finite resources of the states and territories, informed by supply chain risk information.
* The NSR, inclusive of the NCM, will consume information and data from the new ACS and other data sources, analyse this information and provide a national common joint operating picture of the situation.
* The NCM takes a sector-based approach to stakeholder engagement, convening collaborative forums as required to address the specific impacts of a national crisis.  NCM’s expanded remit will prioritise national coordination across Government, through the recently reviewed Australian Government Crisis Management Framework while delivering on development and implementation of national Multi-Jurisdictional Exercise Regime.

## National Situation Room

* EMA operates the National Situation Room (NSR).
* a 24/7 dedicated facility which provides all-hazards incident monitoring and situational awareness, stakeholder notification and response coordination during domestic and international incidents.

The NSR maintains:

* National situational awareness and analysis (Common Operating Picture)
* A touchpoint for Australian Government assistance (domestic and international)
* Critical links with jurisdictional operations centres (Across Australian, state and territory governments)
* Response coordination functions
* Deployable cadre of liaison officers (domestic and international)
* National Security Hotline (links with law enforcement and intelligence agencies)
* Incident specific arrangements through a Crisis Coordination Team (CCT)

Crisis Coordination Team maintains:

* Incident Common Operating Picture
* Crisis Appreciation Strategic Planning
* Australian Government Requests for Assistance
* Incident specific briefing products
* Ministerial briefing products and talking points
* Liaison officers across jurisdictional operations centres
* External liaison officers form part of CCT including the Australian Defence Force

## National Coordination Mechanism

* Established during the COVID-19 to manage the ‘non health’ related impacts and consequences of the pandemic
  + Example - Supermarket Taskforce, Industry experts coming together to manage supply chain issues to alleviate stresses on suppliers following widespread panic buying.
* Collaboration - NCM has helped to bring together key stakeholders across government, regulators and industry to share information, collaborate, and resolve national issues during crisis.
* Consultation - The NCM engages with Commonwealth, States and Territories and industry to develop strategic work to support the Prime Minister and National Cabinet.
* Coordination - The NCM provides a centralised platform, allowing for leading organisations to identify emerging issues at all level of government and tailored responses to risks based on local circumstances.
* Troubleshooting - The NCM has assisted key stakeholders with problem solving, escalating issues to the relevant and appropriate agencies for solutions during the process of whole-of-government responses.
* Expert Informed - The NCM brings together relevant expertise to identify and resolve national issues as the arise
  + Example – AUSRECEPLAN Activation – Liaison with experts across Australian, state and territory agencies, industry and non-government organisations for the safe repatriation and resettlement of Australian Citizens and Approved Foreign Nationals from Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates.